Doctorate Regulations

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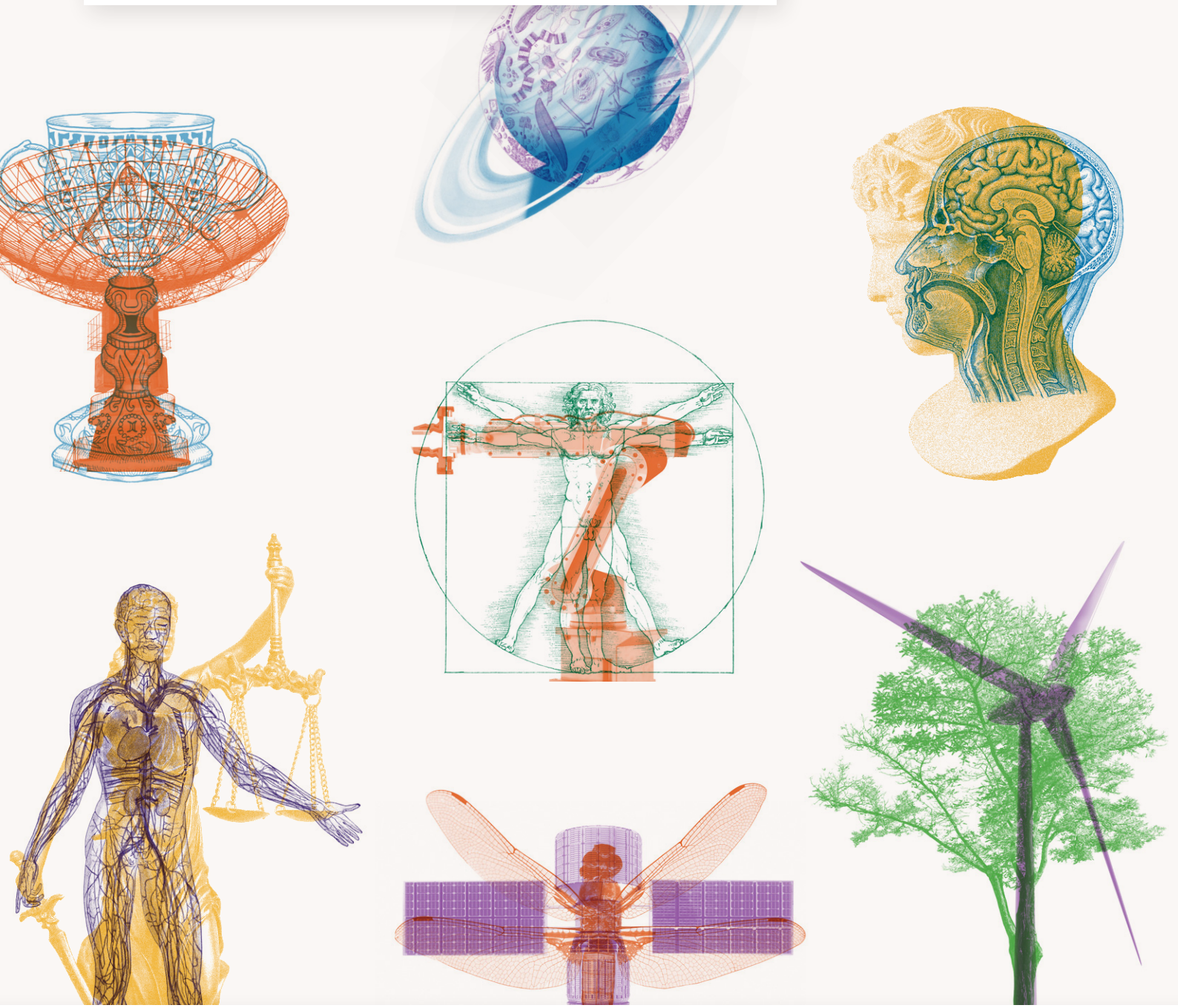
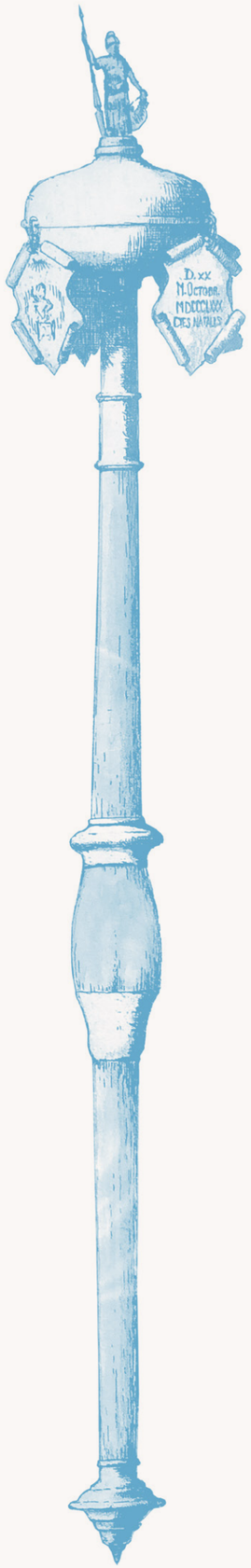


VU VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM



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Section 01

General provisions

Article 1
Definition of terms

These Regulations assume the following definitions (ordered by Dutch text):

Management Regulations	The Management Regulations of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
College of Deans	The College of Deans as defined in the Management Regulations
Co-supervisor	The individual who, as an expert on the subject of the dissertation or part thereof, assists in supervising the PhD candidate
Dean	The dean of the university faculty where the doctoral programme will be completed (unless it appears otherwise from the context)
Director of the Graduate School	The director of the graduate school as defined in the Management Regulations
Double doctorate	Two doctorates obtained simultaneously, one from the university and one from a foreign institution of higher education, based on one dissertation
First supervisor	The doctoral thesis supervisor who heads the supervising team
EC	European credit (1 EC = 28 hours)
Faculty	The university faculty where the doctoral programme will be completed (unless it appears otherwise from the context)
Degree certificate	Written evidence that the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy has been conferred on the PhD candidate
Joint doctorate	One doctoral degree certificate obtained simultaneously from the university and one or more institutions of higher education located in the Netherlands or abroad, based on one dissertation
Ius promovendi	The right to act as PhD supervisor
Training programme certificate	Supplement attached to the degree certificate showing the components of the programme of study that have been successfully completed
Training and supervision plan	Document detailing the requirements of the training and supervision the PhD candidate is to receive during the doctoral programme
Dissertation	The scientific treatment of a topic on the basis of which the PhD candidate will be awarded the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy by the doctorate committee on behalf of the College of Deans
The distinction cum laude	Honour awarded with the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy for dissertations that have achieved a high level of academic excellence
Primary advisor	Member of the supervising team who functions as the first point of contact for the PhD candidate
PhD ceremony	The public defence of the dissertation and conferral of the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy
Supervising team	The team made up of the supervisor(s) and co-supervisor(s) who guide the PhD candidate throughout the doctoral programme
Doctoral programme	The programme of degree requirements, fulfilment of which leads to conferral of the degree and title
Doctorate committee	The committee appointed by the College of Deans in accordance with Article 7.18, paragraph 4, of the Act
Doctoral tracking system	The system of reporting which keeps track of the steps taken towards completing the doctoral programme
Supervisor	The person who supervises the PhD candidate in producing the dissertation and who performs the conferral of the doctorate
PhD candidate	An individual who has been admitted to a doctoral programme
The university	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
The Act	The Higher Education and Research Act (WHW; Wet op het Hoger Onderwijs en Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek)

These Regulations make use of gender-neutral titles and personal pronouns. Some originally male titles in Latin have become generic, such as the Dutch term for 'PhD candidate', 'promovendus'.

Article 2

Based on a PhD candidate's successful public defence of their dissertation, they will be awarded the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy. Unless the PhD candidate indicates otherwise, the degree of Doctor of Philosophy will be conferred.
The PhD degree is conferred by or on behalf of the College of Deans. The conferral of the doctorate will take place in the presence of the doctorate committee.

Article 3

The doctorate committee will hold a closed meeting both before and after the public defence of the dissertation. The matters discussed at this meeting are strictly confidential.

Article 4

The following persons cannot be members of the supervising team or members of the doctorate committee:
a. the partner of the PhD candidate, supervisor, or co-supervisor;
b. first or second-degree relatives, by blood or by marriage, of the PhD candidate, PhD supervisor, or co-supervisor;
c. other persons in respect of whom there are reasonable grounds for doubt as to whether they can pass an impartial judgement on the dissertation.

Article 5

The PhD candidate and members of the supervising team must at all times observe the standards of academic integrity as formulated in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

Article 6

[reserved]

Section 02

Admission to the doctoral programme

Article 7
Application for admission and decision

1. The prospective PhD candidate should submit an application for admission to the doctoral programme to the College of Deans.
2. The application may be sent as soon as the prospective PhD candidate and the proposed first supervisor have completed all the actions assigned to them in Article 9.
3. The dean of the faculty which will be granting the PhD candidate their degree will decide on behalf of the College of Deans within six weeks of the application having been received.
4. The dean will appoint the supervising team at the time of issuing a decision to admit the prospective PhD candidate to the doctoral programme.
5. If the dean has not decided within the term stated in paragraph 3, or has not decided favourably, the prospective PhD candidate may as yet apply to the College of Deans for a favourable decision. The prospective PhD candidate must do this as quickly as possible after the expiration of the term. The College of Deans will take a decision within eight weeks.

Article 8
Conditions

1. The respective dean will admit the prospective PhD candidate to the doctoral programme if:
   a. the prospective PhD candidate has been granted a Master's degree pursuant to Article 7.10(a), paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the Act, or has successfully obtained an equivalent qualification from a foreign institution of higher education;
   b. the prospective PhD candidate has met the additional conditions set by the faculty;
   c. the prospective PhD candidate has submitted a training and supervision plan that meets the requirements of the relevant faculty;
   d. the prospective PhD candidate has agreed to abide by the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity; and
   e. the prospective PhD candidate has not already obtained a doctoral degree.
2. In exceptional cases, the College of Deans may decide to admit a prospective PhD candidate to the doctoral programme who does not meet the requirements given in paragraphs 1(a), 1(b) or 1(e) but does meet all the other requirements of paragraph 1.

Article 9
Procedure

1. The proposed first supervisor should enter the following information into the doctoral tracking system:
   a. the name and email address of the prospective PhD candidate;
   b. the name, email address and professorship (or area of expertise) of the proposed first supervisor; and
   c. the names and professorships (or areas of expertise) of the other proposed members of the supervising team.
2. The prospective PhD candidate should enter the following information and documents into the doctoral tracking system:
   a. the topic of the dissertation;
   b. the training and supervision plan;
   c. a document showing that the requirement given in Article 8, paragraph 1(a) has been met, unless Article 8, paragraph 2, applies;
   d. a signed copy of the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity;
   e. a copy of a valid identity document recognised in the Netherlands in which the personal public service number (BSN), photo and signature have been made unreadable (this will be deleted from the doctoral tracking system when the prospective PhD candidate has been admitted); and
   f. if the doctoral research will partly be made possible by support from outside the university, a short description of this support.

If the document stated at (c) is not written in Dutch or English, the beadle may ask the applicant to add a certified translation in Dutch or English.

Section 03

Supervisors, co-supervisors, supervising team and ius promovendi

Article 10
Supervising team

1. The dean, on behalf of the College of Deans, will appoint a supervising team for every PhD candidate. The supervising team will consist of at least two and no more than four persons, and will comprise the first supervisor, a second supervisor or a co-supervisor, and any other co-supervisors.

2. The supervising team will always include a university employee or a professor holding an endowed chair at the university as one of the supervisors, preferably as first supervisor.

3. Following consultation with the PhD candidate and members of the supervising team, the first supervisor will determine the allocation of duties within the supervising team. This will in any case include the appointment of a primary advisor for the PhD candidate. The role of primary advisor may be assigned to any member of the supervising team. The allocation of duties will be included in the training and supervision plan.

4. Supervisors must hold the ius promovendi (the right to confer doctorates), regardless of which institution has granted this right. Co-supervisors must hold a doctorate.

5. The dean amends the composition of the supervising team during the programme if needed to continue to fulfil all the provisions of this article or to ensure the proper functioning of the supervising team. If the dean would like to appoint a new member to the supervising team, suggestions will be solicited from the PhD candidate. Once the dissertation has been submitted to the supervising team (Article 22(1)), the supervising team may no longer be changed.

6. If it becomes clear that the first supervisor will likely no longer hold the ius promovendi at the time of the PhD defence, the dean will appoint another first supervisor on behalf of the College of Deans, after consulting with the PhD candidate and other members of the supervising team. The College of Deans may appoint the previous first supervisor as co-supervisor.

Article 11
Supervision

1. The first supervisor takes responsibility for the team's supervision of the PhD candidate, heads up the supervising team and ensures that the PhD candidate conducts their research independently.

2. During the period of supervision and while the PhD candidate is preparing the dissertation, the first supervisor and the PhD candidate will meet at least once a year. The primary advisor and the PhD candidate will meet as often as has been determined in the training and supervision plan.

3. The supervision referred to is also aimed at ensuring that the PhD candidate completes the dissertation by the deadline stated in the training and supervision plan, and that it complies with the requirements of these Regulations.

Article 12
Ius promovendi

1. In accordance with the Management Regulations, full professors and professors holding an endowed chair hold the ius promovendi, and, provided they have not been dishonourably relieved of their position, will retain it for five years after the end of their appointment. Pursuant to this article, the College of Deans may also grant the ius promovendi to other university staff members who hold a doctorate and are sufficiently competent to act as supervisor. Any such member of staff will retain their ius promovendi for five years after the termination of their employment, provided they were not dishonourably relieved of their position.

2. A dean may grant ius promovendi on behalf of the College of Deans to an associate professor from their own faculty. The dean will evaluate the competence of an associate professor against the relevant criteria set by the College of Deans.

3. If the dean decides not to grant ius promovendi to an associate professor, the latter may ask the College of Deans to grant it to them instead. The associate professor in question must provide reasons for the request. Once the dean concerned has given their view on the matter, the College of Deans will decide on the request.

4. If a dean wishes to appoint a staff member as a supervisor who is not an associate professor nor holder of the ius promovendi, the dean should send the College of Deans the name of the proposed staff member to be granted the ius promovendi. When making such a request, the dean will state why granting the ius promovendi to the person concerned is justified. If the College of Deans decides not to grant the ius promovendi to the proposed staff member, the latter can ask the College of Deans to reconsider their decision. The proposed staff member must provide reasons for the request. Thereafter the College of Deans will take a final decision on the request.

Section 04

The doctorate committee

Article 13
Composition

1. For each doctorate, the dean will appoint members to a doctorate committee on behalf of the College of Deans. Committee members will be appointed after the supervising team has approved the dissertation. The first supervisor will submit a proposal with suggested names of doctorate committee members supported with reasons, and, if the dean agrees, will verify that they are willing to sit on the committee.

2. The dean has to change the composition of the doctorate committee at any time if this is necessary to continue to fulfil all the provisions of this article or to ensure the proper functioning of the doctorate committee.

3. The following apply to the composition of each doctorate committee, in the case of a dissertation consisting of a scholarly monograph, whether or not combined with an artistic and/or technological component:
   a. The committee has at least five members and no more than six members, including at least one woman and one man
   b. At least one and no more than two committee members must also be appointed within the faculty, and no more than one member may be associated with the first supervisor's institutional unit.
   c. At least two members do not hold appointments at an university that is involved in conferring or co-conferring the degree.
   d. No more than one member may be the co-author of one published article that has been included in the dissertation. No members may be co-authors of multiple articles.
   e. At least two committee members must hold the rank of full professor, the remainder must hold doctorates, and the majority must hold the ius promovendi.

   Where a dissertation consists of a collection of a number of separate scholarly articles, whether or not combined with an artistic and/or technological component, the following applies to the composition of the doctorate committee:
   a. The committee shall have at least three members and no more than six members, including at least one man and one woman.
   b. One member must be appointed within the faculty.
   c. At least one member does not hold an appointment at an university that is involved in conferring or co-conferring the degree.
   d. No members may be co-authors of any article(s) included in the dissertation.
   e. At least one committee member must hold the rank of full professor, the remainder must hold doctorates, and the majority must hold the ius promovendi.

4. If so proposed by the first supervisor with supporting reasons, the dean may decide to appoint an advisor to the committee who does not hold a doctorate, such as an expert from an arts organisation, the business community or civil society organisation.

5. The doctorate committee will be chaired by a person with the rank of full professor who holds an appointment at the university, or another staff member of the university who holds the ius promovendi (regardless of which institution granted this right), or a professor holding an endowed chair at the university.

6. Members of the supervising team may not sit on the doctorate committee.

7. The doctorate committee will be convened for the first time by the dean, who will also appoint the committee's chair. The committee will subsequently be convened by the chair. After a decision has been taken to admit a candidate to the defence, the chair will be relieved of their duties.

8. If a member of the doctorate committee considers that the dissertation does not meet the requirements, they cannot be relieved of their membership of the doctorate committee on that ground.

Section 05

The structure of the doctoral programme and the training programme

Article 14
Training and supervision plan

The training and supervision plan should always include a schedule for completion of the requirements for the doctoral programme, including a date when a 'go' or 'no go' decision regarding continuation of the programme can be taken. The plan should also indicate which graduate school, academic unit or research institute the PhD candidate will be affiliated with.

Article 14a
'No go' decision

If the 'go/no-go' assessment leads to the conclusion that the doctoral programme will not be continued, Article 35(1) applies to the decision-making process in this regard.

Article 14b
Training programme

1. In consultation with their first supervisor, the PhD candidate must set down in writing the content of the training programme in a training and supervision plan. The training programme will cover at least 30 EC.

2. In all cases, the training programme will include a component dealing with current views and regulations regarding academic integrity, and, where relevant, a component on current scholarly methods, methodologies and research techniques.

3. The dean is responsible for ensuring an education offer of sufficient quality is made available, and that the candidate has sufficient time and resources to complete the training programme.

4. The dean may grant exemptions for certain components of the programme, provided there is an indication of the way in which the PhD candidate has met the requirements of the exempted component.

Article 15
Assessment of the programme requirements

1. The PhD candidate will submit a request to the faculty to issue the training programme certificate.

2. The dean will assess the training programme in the manner laid down by the board of the faculty.

3. The dean will ensure that the training programme certificate is produced and issued to the PhD candidate.

4. The dean can authorise the director of the graduate school to carry out the tasks referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3.

Article 15a
Plagiarism check

1. During the first two years of the doctoral programme, a plagiarism check will be carried out on anything appropriate which has been produced within the framework of the doctoral programme. A plagiarism check consists of a scan and an assessment of the results of the scan. The university will decide how the scan is carried out. Discussions will be held between the first supervisor and the PhD candidate. The supervisor (or co-supervisor) involved will draw up a brief report of the meeting, which will state whether or not plagiarism has been identified. The report will be saved in the doctoral tracking system.

2. The dean may allow plagiarism checks to be carried out at a later time for an individual specific case, or in general throughout the faculty, or for those in a particular field. No exemptions will be granted for the plagiarism check.

Article 15b
Director Graduate School

The dean can authorise the director of the graduate school to carry out the tasks assigned to the dean under Article 14b(4), Article 15(2) and (3), and Article 15a(2).

Section 06
The dissertation

Article 16
Conditions

1. The dissertation may consist of:
   a. a scholarly monograph on a specific topic; or
   b. a collection of a number of separate scholarly articles. Some or all of the articles should be in the public domain. The articles must demonstrate sufficient cohesion;
   c. a monograph (a) or collection of articles (b) combined with an artistic and/or technological component that forms an integral part of the dissertation and makes a significant contribution to furthering knowledge in the field.

2. A faculty may set additional rules relating to drafting the dissertation, which form part of the Regulations set out in Article 38, paragraph 2.

3. The dissertation may not contain any material that is contra Deum aut bonos mores (goes 'against God or good morals').

4. If the dissertation consists of a collection of articles, the PhD candidate will outline how these are interrelated in an introductory or concluding chapter.

5. If the dissertation consists of a collection of articles by multiple authors, the PhD candidate must demonstrate that, for each article, their own contribution has been essential. This can be done by adding a page to the dissertation containing a list of references, with an overview of the authors of each article and, for each article, an explanation on the co-authors' contributions.

Article 17
Joint dissertations

1. Where research is jointly conducted by two or three PhD candidates, the results of the research may be expressed in a joint dissertation. In which case, the following conditions must be met:
   a. The first supervisor has determined that each of the authors has made an independent, clearly identifiable contribution that merits the award of a doctorate;
   b. Each of the authors bears personal responsibility for a clearly identifiable part of the dissertation and for the coherence of the dissertation as a whole;
   c. The dissertation must clearly indicate what each of the authors contributed to its completion.

2. In the case of a joint dissertation, the first supervisor must submit to the dean a written statement regarding each author's contribution. This statement must be signed by the first supervisor and by each of the authors.

3. In the case of a joint dissertation, the procedures and rules laid down in these Regulations apply to each PhD candidate individually.

Article 18
Language

1. The dissertation must be written in Dutch or English. Approval for writing the dissertation in another language must be requested from the dean.

2. If the dissertation is written in Dutch, it must contain an abstract in Dutch and an English translation of the title and abstract of the contents.

3. If the dissertation is written in English, it must contain an English abstract of the contents.

4. If the dissertation is written in a language other than Dutch or English, it must contain an English translation of the title and abstract of the contents.

Article 19
Title page

1. The dissertation must contain a title page approved by the Beadle's Office, according to the model set by the College of Deans.

2. The name of the first supervisor and other members of the supervising team must be stated on the page following the title page of the dissertation. Members of the doctorate committee and any potential advisors, as referred to in Article 13, must also be included on that page.

3. In cases where the doctoral research was partly made possible by support from outside the university, this support should only be textually stated on the verso of the page referred to in paragraph 2. Statements of a commercial nature are not allowed in the dissertation.

Article 20
Reproduction

1. Responsibility for copying and distributing the dissertation lies with the PhD candidate.

2. The PhD candidate should decide whether the dissertation will be printed or reproduced in some other similar manner. A condition here is that the dissertation must be clearly legible.

3. The dissertation must be published in a conveniently sized format, and glue bound, spiral bound or with a stitched binding.

4.The PhD candidate must submit an electronic version of the dissertation in its final form and layout at least five weeks prior to the PhD ceremony. The director of the University Library determines how this is to be done. The electronic version contains, in any case, the full and identical text of the paper version of the dissertation, but may also include sections which, for technical and/or logistical reasons, are not (or cannot be) included in the paper version.

5. The PhD candidate must submit to the Beadle of the university five copies of the dissertation, as specified in paragraphs 2 and 3, at least four weeks before the PhD ceremony. These copies are intended for the Rector Magnificus, the dean and the University Library.

6. The University Library will publish a digital version of the dissertation. Publication takes place at least three weeks before the PhD ceremony. If the dissertation is wholly or partly subject to a publishing embargo, the electronic publication of the dissertation will be restricted to the parts not under embargo, i.e. the cover, the title page, the table of contents and abstract of the dissertation in English and, if available, also in Dutch. The other parts of the dissertation will be published when the embargo is lifted.

7. Publication of an electronic version of the dissertation, as referred to in paragraph 4, is subject to the following conditions:
   a. At least six weeks prior to the PhD ceremony, the PhD candidate must provide the university with a licence for the non-exclusive publication of the dissertation in electronic form, if necessary with a temporary publication embargo.
   b. Before granting the licence, the PhD candidate must sign the standard licensing agreement adopted by the Executive Board.
   c. In accordance with the licensing agreement, the PhD candidate is entitled to a fee for providing the dissertation as outlined in paragraphs 4 and 5.

Section 07

Assessment of the dissertation

Article 21
Requirements

1. The dissertation must show evidence of the following:
   a. The PhD candidate is able to contribute to extending the frontiers of knowledge by conducting original research that can withstand the rigours of peer review;
   b. The PhD candidate demonstrates a systematic understanding of a specific branch of knowledge and has demonstrated expertise in the methodologies needed for conducting research in this discipline;
   c. The PhD candidate is able to design, develop, implement and modify a research project;
   d. The PhD candidate is capable of critically analysing, evaluating and synthesizing new and complex ideas in their field and beyond;
   e. The PhD candidate is able to enter into debate with peers in the discipline and the wider scholarly community regarding their expertise in a specific branch of knowledge.

2. The dissertation must meet any further requirements stated in Article 16, as well as requirements set by the faculty.

3. If the provisions of paragraphs 1 and 2 have been met, then the dissertation meets the requirements within the meaning of Articles 22 and 23.

Article 22
Assessment by members of the supervising team

1. The PhD candidate must submit the dissertation to the supervising team for assessment.

2. If all the individual members of the supervising team are satisfied that the dissertation meets the requirements, the supervising team will approve the dissertation. The first supervisor will notify the dean and the PhD candidate as soon as possible that the dissertation has been approved. Unless the dissertation is to be subjected to a plagiarism check in accordance with Article 22(a), the dissertation will be submitted to the doctorate committee for assessment.

Article 22a
Plagiarism check on the completed dissertation

1. The completed dissertation will be subjected to a plagiarism check in the following cases:
   a. if plagiarism has been established during the plagiarism check referred to in Article 14, paragraph 5; or
   b. if this is prescribed by the rules referred to in Article 38, paragraph 2.

2. The plagiarism check consists of a scan and an assessment of the results of the scan. The university will decide how the scan is carried out. An assessor will be appointed by the dean.

3. The assessor will produce a report containing a well supported judgment as to whether the dissertation contains any plagiarism and, if so, the extent and significance thereof. The supervisor, PhD candidate, and dean will receive the report from the assessor.

4. After receiving the report, the dean will decide whether the dissertation contains plagiarism. The dean may only arrive at a decision that plagiarism has been committed in the dissertation after the PhD candidate has been given an opportunity to respond to the report in writing.

5. The dean may decide to give the PhD candidate an opportunity to rectify the plagiarised passages in the dissertation. In such cases, the dean will assess the results.

6. If the dean decides not to offer the PhD candidate an opportunity to rectify any plagiarism that has been detected, or finds that such plagiarism has not been rectified even after changes have been made to the dissertation, then they will terminate the doctoral programme.

7. If the dean determines that no plagiarism has been committed in the dissertation, or that any plagiarism has indeed been rectified, then they will inform the first supervisor, who will then submit the dissertation to the doctorate committee for assessment.

Article 23
Assessment by the doctorate committee

1. Members of the supervising team and members of the doctorate committee will have no contact with each other about the dissertation, except in cases where the chair of the doctorate committee has contact with the first supervisor. The chair of the doctorate committee and the first supervisor may only have contact for compelling reasons or on the grounds of these Regulations, and such contact requires the consent of the dean.

2. The doctorate committee will assess whether the dissertation meets the relevant requirements. Committee members and any potential advisor will give the chair their well supported assessments. They may add suggestions and recommendations to their assessments. Members of the doctorate committee may not abstain from giving an opinion.

3. The chair of the doctorate committee will inform the dean via the designated doctoral tracking system of the committee's findings within 30 days of having received the dissertation. When reporting, the chair will include well supported assessments from each individual committee member and advisor. The dean can extend the time period once by an additional period of 30 days.

4. If all members of the doctorate committee have found that the dissertation meets the requirements, the chair will report the committee members' assessments to the dean on behalf of the committee.

5. If one or more members of the doctorate committee have found that the dissertation does not meet the requirements, the chair will ensure that an exchange of opinions within the committee can take place. If the chair is one of the committee members who has failed the dissertation, they will appoint another member to lead the discussion.

6. If, after an exchange of opinions within the committee, all members decide that the dissertation meets the requirements, the chair will report the committee's favourable opinion to the dean on the committee's behalf.

7. If after an exchange of opinions within the doctorate committee any member finds that the dissertation still fails to meet the relevant requirements, the chair will decide whether the PhD candidate can be permitted to make corrections to the dissertation within a short period of time in a way expected to meet the approval of all members:
   - if this is the case, the chair, on behalf of the doctorate committee, will give the PhD candidate, communicated through the first supervisor, an opportunity to make corrections to the dissertation within a period of 60 days. After receipt of the corrected dissertation, paragraphs 3 and 4 apply once again;
   - if this is not the case, the chair will notify the dean of the judgment of the committee members.

Article 24
Decision on the dissertation

1. After receiving the report of the chair of the doctorate committee, the dean will take a decision on whether or not to approve the dissertation.

2. The decision-making process referred to in paragraph 1 is subject to the following:
   a. if all members of the doctorate committee find that the dissertation meets the requirements, the dean may solely decide not to approve the dissertation after consulting with the College of Deans and providing compelling reasons to justify this decision;
   b. if one member of the doctorate committee is of the opinion that the dissertation does not meet the requirements, but the other members disagree, then the dean may only approve the dissertation with explicit supporting arguments;
   c. if two members of a doctorate committee consisting of five members are of the opinion that the dissertation does not meet the requirements, but the other members disagree, then the dean may only approve the dissertation after consulting with the College of Deans and providing compelling reasons to justify this decision;
   d. if two members of a doctorate committee consisting of three members or if more than two members of the doctorate committee consisting of five members are of the opinion that the dissertation does not meet the requirements, the dean may not approve the dissertation.

3. If the dean does not approve the dissertation, the PhD candidate will be given an opportunity to submit a revised version within a period to be determined by the dean, but no longer than twelve months, unless the dean has good reason to believe that the PhD candidate will not be able to submit a revised dissertation that meets the requirements within this time period. In the latter case, the dean will terminate the doctoral programme. If the revised dissertation is not submitted within the time limit set by the dean, which shall not exceed twelve months, the dean may decide to terminate the doctoral programme.

4. Revised dissertations will be assessed in the manner described in Article 23. The dean will then either approve or reject the revised version of the dissertation. If the revised dissertation is rejected, the dean will terminate the doctoral programme.

Section 08

The PhD ceremony

Article 25
Admission to the doctoral defence

The dean will decide to admit the PhD candidate to the defence after the dissertation has been approved, if the PhD candidate has received the training programme certificate referred to in Article 15 and has met all other requirements contained in these Regulations.

Article 26
Format

1. The PhD ceremony is open to the public and takes place in the presence of the doctorate committee.

2. The conferral of the doctorate takes place at a public meeting of the College of Deans, chaired by the Rector Magnificus. The Rector Magnificus may deputise one of the following to act as chair:
   a. a member or former member of the College of Deans;
   b. the faculty's deputy dean;
   d. a full professor who chairs a department in the faculty; or,
   e. a full professor or emeritus professor at the faculty.

3. The time and place of this meeting will be decided by or on behalf of the Rector Magnificus, in consultation with the first supervisor, the dean and the PhD candidate, with due regard for the availability of the members of the doctorate committee.

4. The College of Deans sets the protocol for the public meeting. The College of Deans also determines the official pronouncement prior to the defence, the official pronouncement following the defence, and the official pronouncement conferring the doctorate.

5. The PhD candidate, members of the supervising team and members of the doctorate committee may, with the approval of the Beadle, use electronic means for taking part in the public meeting of the College of Deans and meetings of the doctorate committee on the day of the PhD ceremony. They will be deemed to be present under the provisions of these Regulations. This is subject to the condition that everyone involved in the PhD ceremony is able to hear everyone else, and also preferably to see them.

Article 27
The doctoral defence

1. For a period of one hour, the dissertation will be defended by the PhD candidate against reservations and queries raised by the doctorate committee and anyone else who has received permission from the Rector Magnificus to be part of the opposition. In consultation with the PhD candidate, the chair of the meeting may give the PhD candidate a maximum of ten minutes at the beginning of this hour during which to present a general explanation of the research that forms the basis of the dissertation.

2. Dutch or English will be spoken during the defence. Other languages are possible if the Rector Magnificus has given their permission.

Article 28
Meetings of the doctorate committee on the day of the PhD ceremony

1. The doctorate committee will meet in a closed meeting both before and after the defence takes place.

2. The following persons will take part in these closed meetings of the doctorate committee:
   a. members of the doctorate committee;
   b. the advisor referred to in Article 13, paragraph 4;
   c. those authorised by the Rector Magnificus to be part of the opposition;
   d. members of the supervising team.

3. Only the members of the doctorate committee have voting rights at the meetings. Other participants at these meetings may give an advisory opinion.

4. The meetings will be chaired by the chair of the public meeting of the College of Deans during which the conferral of the doctorate will take place.

5. The first supervisor will act as secretary to the meeting. In exceptional circumstances, another member of the supervising team may be appointed as secretary by the chair of the meeting.

6. In consultation with the first supervisor, the dean will ensure that five or six opponents are present at the meeting, at least two of whom are members of the doctorate committee.

7. At the meeting following the defence, the doctorate committee will take a decision on behalf of the College of Deans whether or not to confer the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy. Among the factors considered in the decision is the defence of the dissertation by the PhD candidate. The decision regarding the conferral of the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy will be taken by a simple majority of votes cast.

8. The doctorate committee shall decide to confer the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy, unless a vote reveals that the members of the doctorate committee present are unanimously of the opinion that this degree should not be conferred. They may not cast a blank vote or abstain from voting.

9. If the doctorate committee does not decide to confer the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy, it shall notify the College of Deans of this in writing without delay, setting out its reasons. The College of Deans shall take a final decision as soon as possible on whether or not to confer the degree.

Article 29
The conferral of the doctorate

1. Following the closed meeting of the doctorate committee, the chair will reopen the public meeting and announce the results of the deliberations.

2. If the decision has been taken to confer the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy on the PhD candidate, then one of the supervisors from the supervising team will perform the ceremony. The first supervisor will use the official pronouncement for conferral and present the PhD candidate with the degree certificate.

3. After conferral of the doctoral degree, a member of the supervising team will briefly (max. 4 minutes) address the the newly invested doctor.

4. If no decision has been taken to confer the degree, the chair shall inform the candidate of this. The chair shall also state that the College of Deans will take a final decision at a later date as to whether or not to confer the degree.

Article 30
Degree certificate

1. Those who have had the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy conferred on them will receive a degree certificate. The degree certificate is in Latin, signed by the Rector Magnificus and the first supervisor, and bears the seal of the university.
2. Other members of the supervising team may also sign the degree certificate in addition to the first supervisor.

3. If the degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy will be conferred with the distinction cum laude, this will be stated on the degree certificate.

Section 09

The distinction cum laude

Article 31
Procedure for awarding the distinction

1. If the PhD candidate has demonstrated an above average level of excellence in the dissertation, they may be awarded the designation cum laude.

2. Every member of the doctorate committee will provide a well supported explanation in their assessment of why they believe the dissertation ranks or does not rank among the top 5% of publications in the relevant field.

3. If every member, or almost every member, who gives an opinion on the matter believes that the dissertation ranks among the top 5% of publications in the relevant field, the dean will appoint two external referees as quickly as possible.

4. The referees must be full professors or associate professors and experts in the field of the dissertation. The referees may not be members of the doctorate committee.

5. The referees will issue their opinion to the dean. The dean will then decide whether or not to ask the doctorate committee to consider awarding the designation cum laude.

6. If the dean decides to ask the doctorate committee to consider awarding the designation cum laude, they will present the opinion of the referees to the closed meeting of the doctorate committee prior to the defence. At this meeting, a copy of the request and the opinions will be distributed to all those present.

7. The dean and the individuals with whom the referees' opinions have been shared pursuant to this article will treat these opinions with the utmost confidence.

Article 32
Decision on awarding the honour

At the meeting following the defence, the doctorate committee will decide on behalf of the College of Deans whether the designation cum laude should be conferred. The designation cum laude will not be awarded if more than one member of the doctorate committee votes against it at the meeting.

Section 10

Joint doctorates and double doctorates

Article 33
The joint doctoral programme and the joint doctorate

1. A PhD candidate may only pursue a joint doctoral programme at the university with the prior written permission of the Rector Magnificus. The Rector Magnificus may attach conditions to any cooperation agreement concluded between the institutions involved.

2. A request to pursue a joint doctoral programme must be submitted in writing by the first supervisor and the dean to the Rector Magnificus as part of the PhD candidate's training and supervision plan. The request must demonstrate that the dissertation will be produced within the context of a formal partnership between the two universities concerned and as part of a joint research programme.

3. The request to pursue a joint doctoral programme must be drawn up in accordance with the model developed for this purpose.

4. In a joint doctoral programme, the PhD candidate carries out research under the responsibility of a supervisor at VU Amsterdam and a supervisor at the institution with which the partnership has been formed.

5. A joint doctorate is subject to the rules and regulations of the institution where the dissertation will be defended.

6. The degree of Doctor or Doctor of Philosophy will be conferred by the College of Deans in conjunction with a similar body from the partner institution.

Article 34
The double doctoral programme and double doctorate

1. A PhD candidate may only pursue a double doctoral programme at the university with the prior written permission of the Rector Magnificus. The Rector Magnificus may attach conditions to any cooperation agreement concluded between the institutions involved.

2. A request to pursue a double doctoral programme must be submitted in writing by the first supervisor and the dean to the Rector Magnificus as part of the PhD candidate's training and supervision plan. The request must demonstrate that the dissertation is being written in the context of a joint research programme based on a formal partnership between the institutions.

3. The request to pursue a double doctoral programme must be drawn up in accordance with the model developed for this purpose.

4. All requirements applicable to doctoral programmes at the university also apply to double doctorates. The following also applies:
   a. The PhD candidate carries out research under the responsibility of a supervisor at VU Amsterdam and a supervisor at the institution with which the partnership has been formed.
   b. The dissertation must be approved in accordance with the rules of VU Amsterdam and the rules of the partner institution.
   c. The defence of the dissertation at VU Amsterdam and the defence at the partner institution must take place within a period of 120 days.

Section 11

Problems and disputes

Article 35
Doubts concerning completion or the wish to terminate the doctoral programme

1. If a first supervisor believes that, due to a lack of commitment, ability or any other reason, a PhD candidate will not be able to complete their doctoral programme successfully, or that it will take an inordinately long period of time to do so, they must notify both the PhD candidate and the dean. After receiving this notification, the dean will discuss the situation with the first supervisor, the other members of the supervising team and the PhD candidate in order to find out whether there is in fact a serious problem and what might be done to rectify it. The dean with then take a well supported decision to:
   a. have the candidate continue with the doctoral programme, if necessary with additional measures or by agreeing on set targets to address the concerns of the first supervisor, and with a potential change in the membership of the supervising team, in accordance with Article 10, paragraph 5; or,
   b. terminate the doctoral programme.

2. If a PhD candidate believes they will be unable to complete their doctoral programme due to issues with supervision, or that it will take an inordinately long period of time to complete – including situations where the supervising team has not yet approved the dissertation by a date that they could reasonably have been expected to do so – they must notify the first supervisor and the dean. After receiving this notification, the dean will discuss the situation with the first supervisor, the other members of the supervising team and the PhD candidate in order to find out whether there is in fact a serious problem and what might be done to rectify it. Afterwards the dean will take a well supported decision whether additional measures are necessary to assuage the concerns of the PhD candidate, and will potentially proceed to change the membership of the supervising team, in accordance with Article 10, paragraph 5.

3. If a PhD candidate wishes to terminate their doctoral programme, they should notify the first supervisor and the dean. The dean will subsequently terminate the doctoral programme.

4. If the dean observes when implementing this article that changes should be made in the membership of the supervising team, but is unable to enlist the help of the right persons, the dean with terminate the doctoral programme and inform the College of Deans of this decision.

Article 36
Other problems

1. An individual involved in a doctoral programme – including the PhD candidate, a member of the supervising team or a member of the doctorate committee – who has a problem or dispute with one or more of the other individuals involved in the doctoral programme that cannot be addressed on the grounds of Article 35 may ask the dean to mediate.

2. If mediation does not lead to a resolution within eight days, then any one of the individuals involved may refer the case to the College of Deans by means of a clearly worded request. This should be submitted as quickly as possible after the above-mentioned period of eight days has expired.

3. The College of Deans will establish a committee to advise on the problem or dispute. The committee will consist of three full professors who are not involved in the doctoral programme.

4. The committee will hear the individuals involved and may also consult experts. The committee will then issue to the College of Deans a fully substantiated advisory opinion in writing, which is to be formulated as a draft decision. This should take place no later than 60 days after receiving the request referred to in paragraph 2.

5. After the College of Deans has received the advisory opinion, it will reach a decision on the problem or dispute within 30 days. The College will inform the individuals involved of this decision.

6. The College of Deans may extend the period referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 by a single additional period of 30 days, if there is an urgent reason for doing so.

Article 36a
Request to reverse a decision of the dean to terminate the doctoral programme

If a dean terminates a doctoral programme on the grounds of Article 22(a), paragraph 6, or Article 35, paragraph 1(b) or paragraph 4, the College of Deans may, at the request of the PhD candidate, review whether termination or the assessment that resulted in the termination was justified. Such a request should be made as quickly as possible following the dean's decision to terminate the programme. If the College of Deans decides that the PhD candidate may in fact continue with the doctoral programme, it will state how and under what conditions this is to be done. Article 36, paragraphs 3 through 6, apply mutatis mutandis to processing the request.

Section 12

The degree doctor honoris causa

Article 37

1. The College of Deans can confer the degree of doctor honoris causa pursuant to Article 27, paragraph 5, of the Management Regulations, following nomination by a dean. The College of Deans will take a decision on proposed candidates after consulting the Executive Board on the matter.

2. The candidate nominated by the dean for conferral of the degree doctor honoris causa must meet one or more of the criteria listed below:
   a. The candidate has achieved excellence in a field of study but without having received any formal academic recognition. These achievements are evidenced in publications that are universally regarded as having attained a high level of excellence.
   b. The candidate has been involved in multidisciplinary academic research. These achievements are evidenced in publications that are universally regarded as having attained a high level of excellence, and in invited papers presented at international scholarly conferences and academic institutions.
   c. The candidate has performed activities of clear societal and/or cultural significance that are consistent with the unique character of the university, or in which the unique character of the university is evidenced. There should be verifiable written and oral evidence, or some other form of tangible evidence, that the candidate meets this condition.

3. Anyone who previously received an honorary doctorate from the university is not eligible for a second conferral. The College of Deans may make an exception if it believes that circumstances justify this.

4. The College of Deans will determine where and when the ceremony conferring the degree doctor honoris causa will take place.

Section 13

Final and transitional provisions

Article 38

1. In cases not covered by these Regulations or in cases where an article is open to various interpretations, the final decision rests with the College of Deans.

2. The dean may impose additional requirements on a PhD candidate's doctoral programme, after consulting the full professors at the faculty. Any such requirements must be approved by the College of Deans.

Article 39

The College of Deans is authorised to make amendments to these Regulations. Amendments are ratified by simple majority of votes cast.

Article 40

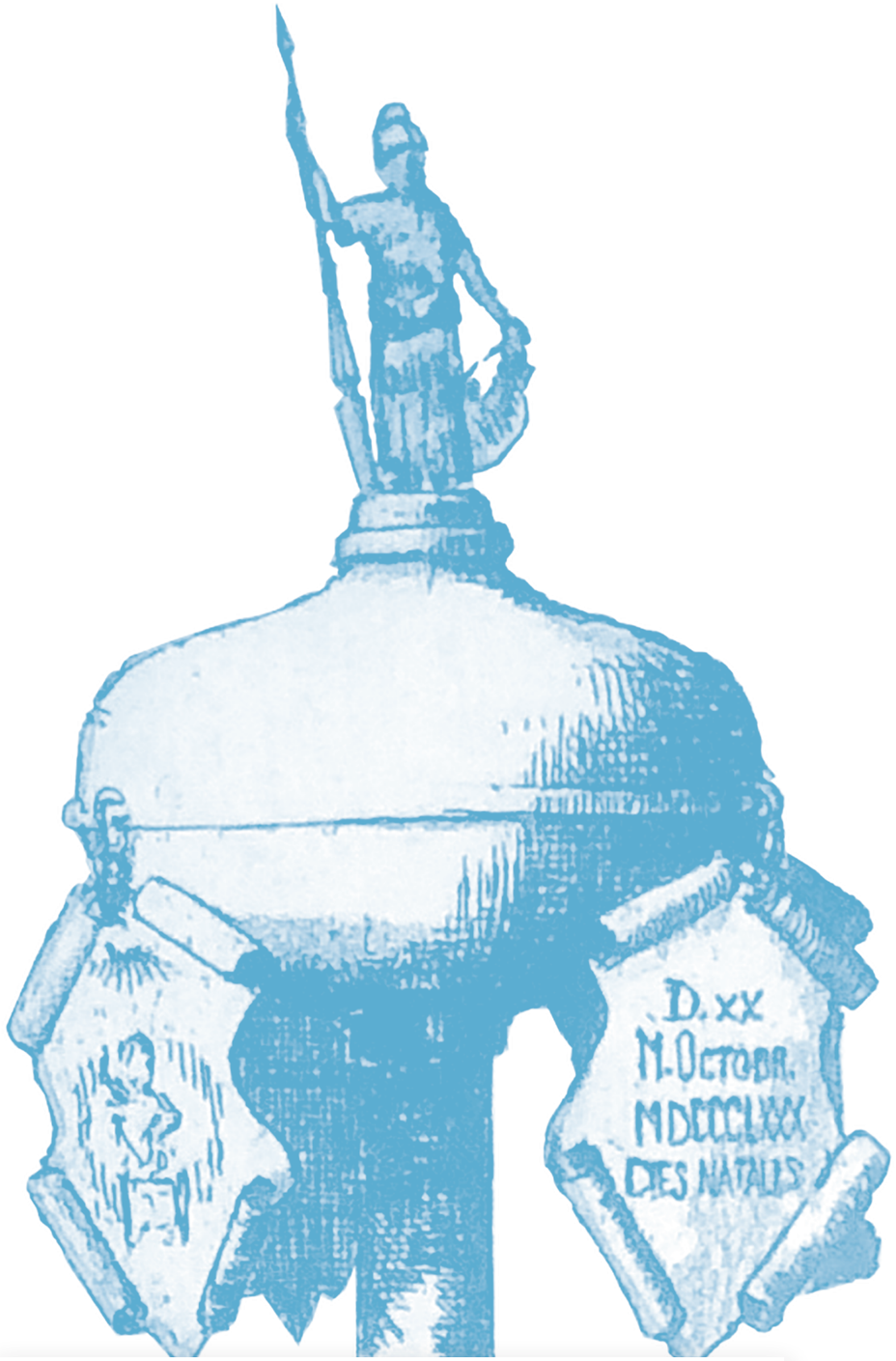
Any person who brings an appeal before the College of Deans for a decision taken by a dean or by the College of Deans (or the omission of such a decision) may enlist legal assistance.

Article 41

In the case of applications for admission to a doctoral programme dated before 1 April 2015, the College of Deans may allow deviations from these Regulations. In such cases, any procedure must be in compliance with the Regulations in force between 1 April 2010 and 1 April 2015. There must also be compelling reasons for deviating from the Regulations.

Article 42

These Regulations entered into force on 1 September 2002 and were most recently amended on 1 October 2026.



Procedural regulations

1. If the prospective PhD candidate holds an employment contract or another type of contract or agreement, an application for admission to the doctoral programme must be submitted no later than within one month of the start date of the said contract.

2. If a staff member at the university has been approached to act as supervisor by a prospective PhD candidate who will not be entering the employment of the university as a PhD candidate, the following guideline applies: once it is clear that the project in question is of genuine academic value and the proposed first supervisor deems the prospective PhD candidate to be capable of completing a dissertation at a sufficiently high level of excellence, the latter may apply for admission to the doctoral programme via the doctoral tracking system. PhD candidates with their own financial resources must in general be registered at least two years before the date of the PhD ceremony. Research that has not been carried out predominantly under the supervision of members of the supervising team cannot form the basis of a dissertation.

3. The College of Deans has set the following two criteria for deans to apply when deciding whether an associate professor is sufficiently competent to act as a supervisor:
   a. the proposed supervisor is an excellent researcher, as evidenced by positive peer evaluations and recognition, such as the award of grants for externally funded research, the assessment 'excellent' on applications for such grants, or multiple peer reviewed publications evidencing a high level of scholarly excellence; and
   b. the proposed supervisor is an excellent supervisor, as evidenced by at least two successfully completed doctorates that they have supervised in the formal role of co-supervisor.

4. With regard to Article 14, the training programme components may vary from specialist courses to participation in seminars or conferences, as well as activities or courses that enhance the PhD candidate's transferable skills. A minimum number of credits has been determined for the compulsory academic integrity component (2 credits) and conference component (1 credit for conference attendance, 2 credits for conference attendance with paper and/or presentation).

5. Arrangements with the Beadle on the date and time of the PhD ceremony can only be made once the dean has approved the dissertation, as referred to in Article 24. As a rule, the PhD ceremony will begin at 09:45, 11:45, 13:45 or 15:45. PhD ceremonies must take place as soon as possible after admission to the defence, as set out in Article 25.

6. The title 'Doctor of Philosophy' will be stated as standard on the degree certificate (Philosophiæ Doctor). If the PhD candidate prefers, the title 'Doctor' may be stated on the certificate instead. The PhD candidate should indicate their choice of degree when submitting the title page in the doctoral tracking system.

7. Professors at the university, those from other universities, and anyone taking part in the closed meeting may join the ceremonial procession. At the public meeting of the College of Deans and the meetings of the doctorate committee on the day of the PhD ceremony, the supervising professors are required to wear their ceremonial cap and gown. Other members of the supervising team and opponents at the defence who are not full professors should wear dark clothing that is appropriate for the occasion and accept the judgment of the Beadle as to whether particular clothing is in fact appropriate.

8. Professors and members of the supervising team using electronic means to take part in the public meeting of the College of Deans and the meetings of the doctorate committee on the day of the PhD award ceremony should, if possible, wear their ceremonial cap and gown or dark clothing appropriate for the occasion.

9. At the PhD ceremony, PhD candidates should wear white tie or other clothing appropriate for the occasion. Appropriate clothing is also defined as appropriate traditional clothing from the PhD candidate's home country. The PhD candidate should accept the judgment of the Beadle as to whether particular clothing is appropriate for the occasion.

10. The PhD candidate will be assisted by two ceremonial assistants during the PhD ceremony. The ceremonial assistants are subject to the same dress code as the PhD candidate. For electronic PhD ceremonies, the PhD candidate may dispense with the support of ceremonial assistants if they so wish.

11. The PhD ceremony, and in particular the defence of the dissertation, is open to individuals aged eight or older. The PhD candidate must mention this age limit on any invitations sent out.

12. PhD defences will be listed on the university's website. Professors at the university will receive a monthly schedule from the College of Deans listing all PhD ceremonies.

13. In the case of the conferral of a double doctorate as referred to in Article 33, a reference to the partner institution that is party to the double doctorate programme will be included on the recto of the degree certificate and on the statement attached to the degree certificate.

VU VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM